



State of Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Horse Tests Positive for Rabies
Public Health Risk Low
Officials Stress Importance of Vaccination for Animals

ANNAPOLIS, MD (July 3, 2003) – An Anne Arundel County, Maryland horse has tested positive for rabies. The horse, named Coup de Harmony, competed at the East Coast Barrel Bash in Harrington, DE on June 19-21.

Public health and veterinary officials feel that because of the specific situation, the risk to human health is minimal. If a horse owner or any other individual has had recent contact with Coup de Harmony they should contact their local health department.

In addition, anyone with a horse that may have come in contact with the infected horse at the event is asked to contact their veterinarian to make sure that the animal's rabies vaccination is up-to-date and to receive a booster if necessary.

“We are conducting a full investigation into the case and have made contact with most of the competitors at the event in Delaware and individuals who may have come in contact with the horse recently. We are reaching out at this time to make sure we did not miss anyone who might have had physical exposure to the rabid horse,” said Maryland State Veterinarian Dr. Phyllis Cassano. “The current situation emphasizes the importance of the rabies vaccine for pets and horses, especially if they are competing or otherwise interacting with other animals and the general public.”

Clinical signs of rabies are rarely definitive. The most reliable signs, regardless of species, are behavioral changes and unexplained paralysis. Horses and mules frequently show evidence of distress and extreme agitation. These signs, especially when accompanied by rolling, may be interpreted as evidence of colic. As with other species, horses may bite or strike viciously and, because of size and strength, become unmanageable in a few hours. Such animals frequently suffer self-inflicted wounds (Source: The Merck Veterinary Manual, www.merckvetmanual.com). While these are some clinical signs of rabies, they are no replacement for diagnosis by a licensed veterinarian.

(more)

Rabies is transmitted through a bite of a rabid animal. There is a small possibility of indirect transmission through the saliva of a known rabid animal to the eye, nose, mouth or open cut of a person or mammal. The risk of indirect transmission is low. Rabies is a fatal disease but easily preventable with current vaccination. Preventative treatment for rabies is effective in humans but must be started as soon as possible after exposure.

Rabies is present in all Maryland counties. Horses and all pets, including dogs, cats and ferrets, should be kept up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations. Wildlife, including raccoons, skunks, and bats as well as stray dogs and cats, should not be approached, handled or fed.

“We remind everyone to make sure their animals’ rabies vaccinations are current,” said Dr. Cassano.

Information about rabies is available from your personal physician or veterinarian or online at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies and www.merckvetmanual.com (search for equine rabies).

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